Meet Me At The Crossroads

Female, Black, LGBT and Christian. Meet me at the crossroads. Indeed it is at the intersection of the multiple identities that we hold that we may find oppression, disdain and often hate.

As I watched Ferguson, Missouri smoldering literally and emotionally like Watts in the sixties, I was compelled to stand up for me - myself and the other me. As a Black, Female, Lesbian, Christian, mother, many things about this incident make me feel sad, angry and disempowered. And I recognize that I can't face the overwhelming grief and frustration, nor be an avid activist in isolation. So I turn to my community, colleagues, peers and family.

Part of my hope and commitment and even direction comes from my association with the UCC. We are a denomination that ministers to the World at the margins. God's Extravagant Welcome is shared to all those "whoever and wherever" folks on life's journey.

Still for some of us it's complicated. The church is the place where many of us were nurtured and the place that we can most identify with after facing a world where we fight to be accepted by others. And yet, some of us find that we are not welcomed fully, when we have to check one of ourselves at the door. We have to some part of ourselves tucked away in a dark and lonely closet.

I thought about a scripture that described a similar experience that Jesus had. I John 11, the story is recounted that Jesus was in his own community, ready to share his gifts with them. Capable of bring healing and miracles. But they decided that he wasn't "their kind." They labeled him and said "nothing good" could come from his origins.

Now I can imagine that when word got around later that Jesus was becoming somebody. The community took some credit for his gifts, while they downplayed all the things they disdained about him.
But like Jesus, those who are marginalized can be assured that God created them and called them to a purpose. And like Jesus many African-American people, women and same gender-loving people impact the church and the world in great ways.

Click here to read the rest of the article on the SECUCC website

Rev. Gwen Thomas, SEC Vice-moderator and ONA Coordinator

Jottings from June

One of the more enjoyable experiences I have had in ministry was participating in an executive training session at Disney World, the Magic Kingdom in Orlando. The participants received a book, *Be Our Guest: Perfecting the Art of Customer Service*. It opens with this quote from Walt Disney: "In this volatile business of ours, we can ill afford to rest on our laurels, even to pause in retrospect. Times and conditions change so rapidly that we must keep our aim constantly focused on the future."

Now I am aware that congregants are not customers but we are trying to do church in a very consumer oriented society. So how do we begin to look at how we offer our message in effective ways? I think that it is helpful to consider the lessons of the past but we cannot rest in this place for the call of Christ to be in the world and bearers of Gospel light is always before us leading us onward. And we are all aware that we are living in times where things are changing rapidly and we need to figure out how to accommodate and incorporate those influences in our life together as the Body of Christ.

Your newly elected Southeast Conference Board of Directors met on September 12 and 13 and began the process of looking at their own strengths in leadership and good governance with the help of Don Clark and Heather Kimmel of the office of the General Counsel of the United Church of Christ. They then looked at the work ahead to create an organizational culture and ways of doing things that will support and enhance the mission and ministry of this Conference. But we know we can't rest on our laurels. Instead we need to look at how we move this beloved part of the church into the future God envisions for our life and ministry in this particular part of God's creation. I hope you will be partners on this journey with our leadership group and that you will add your part to the conversation and to the work that is before us.

Click here to read the rest of June's message on the SECUCC website

Blessings, June

The Road Less Traveled

A reflection on the GTE Immersion Trip

The final week of August 2014 was filled with unforgettable moments among the twelve who had embarked

on the Global Theological Education (GTE) immersion trip to the Blackfeet Nation in Montana. Three leaders and nine participants-traveling from Georgia, Tennessee, and Iowa- stayed at a 20,000 acre private ranch in the heart of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, some of us meeting for the first time face-to-face after nearly two years of learning together through the PATHWAYS online course platform.

The excitement and the joy of coming together as a group abounded, while the anxiety of facing the unknown in a new place was palpable. The intensity of emotions-both good and bad-stayed with the group throughout the week as the participants encountered several different cultures to learn about in a short period of time and coped with a unique communal life in the context of unfamiliar surroundings. The group learned about the ranch life where 500 cattle roam freely on the vast grassland next to the seemingly endless wheat and barley fields; we discovered the state-of-the-art model of communal living at the Hutterite colony whose residents gave the group a lot to think about; we met Blackfeet natives who presented us with the Blackfeet history, culture, and life marked by tumultuous past and uncertain future; and we explored the striking wonders of Nature in the Glacier National Park that neighbors the ranch.

Click here to continue reading on the SECUCC website

Sarah Kim, Dean of PATHWAYS

ONA/Pride Weekend Events!
"Seven Words of Affirmation" ONA Service
October 11, 2014
Victory for the World in Stone Mountain

3:00pm "The New Black" Movie Screening and panel
6:00pm - Reception
7:30pm - "Seven Words of Affirmation" ONA Service

Join with other UCC churches for ONA/Pride weekend! The events will kick off on Saturday afternoon with a screening and panel discussion of the documentary The New Black, which examines how the African American community (and more specifically, African American churches) are continuing to grapple with the issue of LGBTQ+ equality. This will be followed by a reception, giving attendees an opportunity to fellowship with each other. The evening will conclude with the ONA service featuring seven speakers, including Designated Conference Minister, June Boutwell, offering sermonettes on passages from Michael Piazza's book, *Queeries*.

This Friday and Saturday!
Alabama Tennessee Association Annual Meeting

First Congregational UCC-Birmingham Alabama
Friday & Saturday, October 3-4
"Together We Can...Together We Will!"

Friday evening the keynote speaker will be Rev. J.R. Finney of Covenant Community Church UCC in Center Point, Alabama. Saturday the meeting agenda is a discussion and prayerfully vote on the proposal submitted by an appointed Task Force and approved by the Executive Committee of the AL/TN Association. All Association churches are urged to send delegates prepared to vote on this matter.

Please mark your calendar with the following events!

We are very excited about this event and hope that you will be able to participate by attending, encouraging members of your church to attend, or providing a financial donation to help sponsor the event. For more information about this opportunity, contact Gwen Thomas or her assistant, Erin Johnson.

Here are relevant links for Pride weekend:

Atlanta Gay Pride
The New Black
Victory for the World Church
UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns

March in the Atlanta Pride Parade
October 12, 2014

Now in our third year, churches from across the Southeast Conference will join once again to march together in this year's Atlanta Pride parade. Congregations from across the SEC are invited to come to Atlanta and join others in a show of our wide welcome, solidarity, and unity on Sunday, October 12, 2014.

Churches are encouraged to wear UCC or UCC congregation t-shirts and carry signs showing our radical hospitality and inclusion. The past two years have been very successful for our contingent, as we have shouted that "God is Still Speaking." If the growth of our Atlanta congregations is any indication, that message is being heard in the community loud and clear!

The welcome link to participants at Pride is www.ucc.org/atlanta which redirects to www.secucc.org/pride. You can share these links with friends interested in the radical hospitality of the United Church of Christ.

If you are interested in participating in the parade as either a solo participant or as a congregation, please contact Erin Johnson, our volunteer coordinator from Kirkwood UCC. She

2014

October 3-4 *ALATENN Meeting First Congregational Birmingham, AL*

October 6-8 *Retired Servants Retreat, Blowing Rock Assembly Grounds, Blowing Rock, NC*

October 9-11 *African American Women in Ministry Conference, Franklinton Center at Bricks, NC*

October 11 *ONA Service at Victory for the World, Stone Mountain, GA*

October 12 *Congregations march in the Atlanta Pride Parade, Atlanta GA*

October 16 *Unveiling of Rush Memorial Congregational Church Historic Site Designation, Atlanta, GA*

November 1 *MID Committee, Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga, TN*

November 4 *Retired Clergy Lunch, Decatur UCC, GA*

November 7-8 *Emergence Retreat, Clemson SC*

November 15 *Commission on Ministry Meeting, Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga*

2015

January 16-19 *Winter Youth*

can be reached at erinrebecca@live.com.

Generosity Corner

Stewardship Theme Materials

Theme: Blessed to Be a Blessing

Coordinated materials for UCC churches' annual stewardship campaigns. Available: poster, letterhead, envelope, four bulletin inserts (including giving chart), note card, commitment cards, and more.

Graphics kit also available for just $39.99.
See all Theme Materials here.
Click here to order now >>

OCWM Our Churches Wider Mission

3rd Quarter OCWM contributions are due the end of September. Church treasurers and Pastors, please note September 30th is here! If you would like to use the Conference OCWM Giving Envelope, please click here.

OCWM guest speakers for your congregation

The Southeast Conference Board of Directors have offered their availability to make a special presentation to your congregation about "Your OCWM dollars at work" during October and November. Please contact Debbie Spearman at dspearman@secucc.org if your church would like to schedule a speaker.

Debbie Spearman, Generosity Coordinator

Retreat, Blowing Rock Conference Center, Blowing Rock, NC

February 21 *Commission on Ministry, Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga, TN*

June 11-13 *Pre-event and Southeast Conference Annual Meeting, Piedmont College, Demorest GA*

June 26-30 *General Synod in Cleveland, OH*

August 8 *Commission on Ministry, Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga, TN*

October 16-18 *Southern Regional Women's Conference, Sumatanga Retreat Center, Gallant, AL*

2016

July 26-29 *National Youth Event Orlando, FL*

African American Women in Ministry Conference at Franklinton Center
October 9-11, 2014

With the theme "Embracing God's Call: From Isolation to Celebration" all are invited to join in the African American Women in Ministry

Winter Youth Retreat
January 16-19, 2015

Come join us for the 2015 Annual Winter Youth Retreat at Blowing Rock Conference Center! This is a great time shared between youth of the Southeast and Southern Conferences with worship, service, snow, and fun. This year's retreat features the music of the band Lost and Found, new service opportunities, and offsite activities such as skiing and snowboarding.

You can download the Winter Youth Retreat Flyer here
Download registration materials here

Emergence Retreat - November 7-9, 2014

The Emergence Retreat, created by Peace Congregational UCC, will be held at the beautiful Outdoor Lab in Clemson, South Carolina to bring GLBTQ young adults and their communities of faith together for education, open dialogue, spiritual growth and healing. Registration will open soon.
Click here for the Emergence website.
Read the article about Emergence on the SECUCC website by clicking here.

Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

Conference at Franklinton Center. This year's conference includes a celebration of 50 years in ministry of Yvonne Delk, the first African American woman ordained in the UCC. Guest speakers include Rev. Dr. Christine Wiley, co-pastor of Covenant Baptist/UCC in Washington, the Rev. Dr. Valerie Bridgeman, founder and Executive Director of WomanPreach and the Rev. Dr. Jennifer Leath, pastor of Campbell AME Church, Media, PA. There will be spirited worship, wisdom circles, panel discussions and a little time for fun and sistership.

More information and registration materials can be found on the UCC website by clicking here.

Fourth Annual Retired Servants Retreat

Retired UCC Clergy, Missionaries, Volunteer Ministry Workers and Spouses of the Southeast and Southern Conferences of the United Church of Christ are invited to a Fourth Annual Retired Servants Retreat at Blowing Rock Conference Center, Blowing Rock, North Carolina October 6-8, 2014 (Monday-Wednesday). Retreat Theme:
Justice and Peace through the UCC.

Click here for more information on the SECUCC website

CWS Matching Grants for Disaster Relief Kits!

Church World Service is offering matching funds for congregations to create disaster relief kits for their work around the world. There are still many available, and this makes a great activity for volunteers, small

groups, and youth groups in your congregation

To read about matching grants for churches click here to go to the CWS website.

For More Information on Above Ads **>> Click the Links Below**
A. **SEC Offices** / B. **PATHWAYS** / C. **Capital Campaign**